



FEMA

Mayor Steers Tiki Island Turnabout

Tiki Island, TX – When Hurricane Ike (2008) was bearing down on his town in late summer 2008, Mayor Charlie Everts knew it would be Tiki's toughest test. Townspeople had been working for years to prepare for a Hurricane Ike. "We've worked hard to build above and beyond the standards for coastal construction," said Everts. "Hurricane Ike proved we did the right thing."

Storm winds topping 100 mph blew waters from the Gulf of Mexico across the island, causing surges of 10 to 12 feet. The first blast came from the gulf, across nearby Galveston Island. After the eye passed, a second surge, blown from the opposite direction, soaked the island. The result? "Everything appeared to work as planned," Mayor Everts said. "People evacuated when we asked. Nobody died. Nobody was injured during the storm. Nobody is missing from Tiki Island."

The majority of Tiki's 950 homes are supported on tall concrete pilings. "We lost the downstairs on most of these houses, as we expected – the breakaway walls broke away with the force of the water, just as we planned," Everts said. "The breakaway walls on one house took out the breakaway on the next one. We got a lot of debris from the neighboring communities, too. We had to bring in volunteers with front-end loaders to get through the streets. But, overall we did pretty well. I am really proud of how it turned out here."

Tiki Island, a town of only 1.5 square miles, is largely a manmade island. It was built in the 1960s when developers excavated for a channel and used the fill to elevate the land to between 4 and 10 feet above sea level. At first, Tiki was primarily a small fishing camp, although it evolved into a place for weekend homes, and then into a village that was incorporated in 1983. It is now home to about 1,250 people whose upscale homes sit mainly on the waterfront.

In the town's early years, Tiki Island stayed in hot water with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) over a tangle of floodplain management compliance disputes. "Tiki had a terrible reputation in floodplain management circles then and probably deserved it," said the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) Dale Hoff, who worked with the community for years to try to resolve the compliance issues. He credits Everts with turning the situation around.

When Everts took office in 1992, Tiki was on probation with the NFIP, in danger of losing federal flood insurance for its citizens. "We were concerned that we would have no insurance, no mortgages, no future," recalled Alderman Phil Hopkins. "We were all pulling in different directions then," Everts said. "It took years of building community consensus. Now I think we're all pulling together, everybody has come together."

Now the village is off probation and has progressed so far that the NFIP gives Tiki Island residents a 10 percent break on their flood insurance premiums. "We're very proud of our building standard," said the mayor. "We try to go above and beyond the minimum standard set by FEMA and the standard coastal codes. I think we do it better than a lot of other areas."



Galveston County,
Texas



Quick Facts

Sector:

Private

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Building Codes

Primary Funding:

Private funds